School of Social Sciences

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I hereby declare that the short synopsis **"Concept of Social Justice of John Rawls and Amartya Sen: An Analytical Study"** being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **POLITICAL SCIENCE** under **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES** of U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj during the academic year **2022**.

It is a bonafide record of original work carried out under the supervision of **Dr. TRIVIKRAM TIWARI** and has not been submitted in full or part to any other university or institute for a degree or diploma. Further, it is certified that the short synopsis is plagiarism-free and the repot has been submitted.

Priti
Signature
Priti
En. No.- 2100602

Research Supervisor
Signature
Dr. Trivikarm Tiwari
Faculty of Political Science

Signature
Prof. Santosha Kumar
Director, School of Social Science

24/05/23
Signature
Prof. P. K. Pandey
(Director, R&D Cell)

"CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTIC OF JOHN ROWLS AND AMARTYA SEN: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY"

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

to

U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj

by

Priti

Enrolment No. 2100602

Under the Supervision of

Dr. Trivikram Tiwari

Faculty of Political Science

U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University Shantipurm,

(Sector –F) Phaphamau, Prayagraj – 211021

Priti

Abstract

Justice has been a key concept among other political traditions since ancient times. The fundamental idea behind the origination of any tradition like; liberty, equality, democracy and establishment of any kind of governmental institution or NGO is to help the people to live a just and happy life. This research, "Concept of Social Justice of John Rawls and Amartya Sen: An Analytical Study" will present in-depth analysis of core ideas regarding their concept of social justice. John Rawls, in his famous work 'A Theory of Justice', present his concept of social justice in the form of 'justice as fairness' which means the principle of justice must be chosen under the fair conditions. On the other side, Amartya Sen, in his seminal work 'A Theory of Justice', proposes his concept of justice as 'capability approach'. Capability approach directly engage with a person's capability to do things that has actual value in their life. Concept of social justice has innumerable aspects of explaining the just and happy life. This research will present the conceptual analysis of the concept of social justice of John Rawls and Amartya Sen and it will also present an analytical study of how their concept of justice can be helpful in upliftment of the individual and in the progress of the society.

Keywords: Social Justice, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Liberty, Freedom, Equality, Capability Approach.

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Introduction

Justice has been portrayed as the master concept of political thought. The basic idea behind the commencement of any political, economic, social, cultural and other system lies in this fact that how to ensure a just process of subsistence or worthy life. The significance of any system will be proved only when it is based on justice. The absence of justice in any kind of system indicates that system is unjust, which has never been the basis of the establishment of any system in history till date.

Different scholars and theorists have given different approaches to define the concept of justice. Ancient thinkers, especially Plato and Aristotle define the concept of justice as 'virtue' and only virtuous people can build a just society. In Indian context, Dharma was inextricably related to all the dimensions of human life, for instance, salvation, karma, justice and knowledge and so on could not be separated from Dharma. Thus in the both traditions being virtuous was just process in itself.

This study aims to critically analyze and compare the conceptions of social justice proposed by Rawls and Sen, exploring their theoretical foundations, methodologies, and practical implications. By examining their frameworks, the study seeks to address the question: How do Rawls's and Sen's approaches to social justice differ in their conceptual underpinnings, and what are their implications for addressing contemporary inequalities? The analysis will contribute to understanding the relevance of their theories in tackling global challenges such as poverty, gender inequality, and distributive justice.

The significance of this study lies in its comparative approach, which bridges Western liberal philosophy (Rawls) with a global, pluralistic perspective (Sen). It aims to offer insights into how these theories can inform policymaking in diverse socio-economic contexts, particularly in addressing systemic inequalities in developing nations like India.

Even after determining the resources, inequality would be continue in the society because the principle of justice does not able to provide any alternative through which the best exercise of those distributed resources can be determined. Capability approach given by Amartya Sen regarding the concept of social Justice suggests a better alternative to this problem because it is concerned with those capabilities of individuals which is inherent in individual and inspires them to do their best. So this research is mainly focused upon the study of

concept of social justice of John Rawls and Amartya Sen because Social justice and capability approach both are deeply interconnected with each other because no one can develop his or her capabilities unless he or she has the adequate amount of resources.

Literature Review

Conducting any type of research, review of literature is most important factor that helps the researcher to make a solution regarding his or her research problem. Literature review is not just a tool to find out a problem but also a possibility in itself through which a better solution can be drawn.

Sen's capability approach, articulated in Development as Freedom (1999) and The Idea of Justice, shifts the focus from idealized principles to practical outcomes. Sen argues that justice should be evaluated based on individuals' capabilities to achieve valued functionings, emphasizing freedom, agency, and pluralism. Critics like Martha Nussbaum (Creating Capabilities, 2011) have refined Sen's approach by proposing a list of central capabilities, while others, like Jonathan Wolff (Disadvantage, 2007), question its operationalization.

Comparative studies, such as those by Thom Brooks (The Global Justice Reader, 2008), highlight the tension between Rawls's institutional focus and Sen's outcome-oriented approach. However, there is a gap in literature systematically analyzing how these theories address contemporary challenges like climate justice, digital inequality, and cultural diversity. This study aims to fill this gap by critically evaluating their applicability in diverse contexts, particularly in India, where caste, gender, and economic disparities pose unique challenges.

David Millar, (1976) in his book *"Social Justice"* presents the conceptual analysis of substantive justice through description of different norms to determine the nature of social justice. In this book he identified three such criteria of defining the nature of justice through which different scholars are trying to find solution the problem of justice. First criteria is 'protection of acknowledged right'. This promotes to the hierarchical order. The second criteria is 'distribution according to desert' and it leads to competitive system and the last is 'distribution according to need' that favors the solidarity community .

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The criteria 'according to his desert', if somebody is not able to achieve such a thing that is beyond his present capability, then would it be right to deprive him of that thing ? Altogether this criteria does not provide any alternative to upliftment of individuals and progress in the society.

Morten Fibieger Byskov, (2018) in his book *"The Capability Approach in Practice: A New Ethics in Setting Development Agendas"* provides a philosophical basis for choosing goals for development purposes. This book is divided into seven chapters. this book presents inclusive and democratic model that favors the involvement of stakeholders in determining the development. This book present the data regarding the various case studies from different countries like; Brazil, Egypt and India that demonstrate how capability approach can be applied in real world scenarios. Along with this, Byskov addresses three key question that is core of both "development ethics" and "capability approach". The question is, "which development goals should be pursued ?", " who should decide?" and last one is "what method should be employed in deciding?". Thus this book provides a novel and illuminating contribution to those who want to study in the field of capability approach.

L.Capeheart and D.Milolvanonie, (2007), in their book *"Social Justice: Theories, Issues and Movement"* tries to give a appropriate definition of 'social justice'. They shortly described the concept of justice given by several thinkers and theorists since ancient to modern time. In the part two of his book he mentioned how the emerging issues, like multiculturalism, globalism and effect of postmodernity and suchlike, are creating a huge difficulty in the way of achieving the social justice. In the end, he described the role of legal struggles to sustain the justice in the society. In their book they narrates 'what is social justice?' but they did not mention how is it connected or influenced the other dimensions of life? In short, he presented only a brief analysis of social justice.

Brian Barry, (2005) in his work *"Why Social Justice Matters"* presents the conceptual analysis of social justice. This book is divided into six parts and every part has many subparts. In the first part of the book, he describes the importance of theory that is related to justice. He also refers those factors that causes injustice. Part two is concerned with the importance of equal opportunities in establishment of justice. Barry describes those component of meritocracy which is failed to achieve justice. In his book he tries to show that injustice is pervasive in the society not because the inconsistent rule of government but

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because the irresponsible behavior of the societies. In short, this book is starts from the need of social justice and end on the future of social justice, between them it describes those factors through which justice can be determined and those causes which is huge obstacle in achieving justice.

This study is based only on social justice and is inadequate for comparative study of social justice and capability approach.

In their book "New Frontier of the Capability Approach," Flavio Comin, Shailaja Fennell, and P.B. Anand (2018) examine the new frontiers of capability approach and its connections to human development in three key domains. It begins by exploring the philosophical underpinnings of the method, revisiting its connections to the notions of communal agency, epistemic variety, and the common good. In order to provide comprehensive explanations of some of the most cutting-edge techniques accessible to capability researchers, it secondly tackles its "operational frontier." Third, it explores the many uses for which this methodology may be applied, as demonstrated by both distinguished capability scholars and researchers from various fields. The information in this book is insufficient for a comparative analysis of the capacity and social justice approaches.

Gordon Marshall and Adam swift, (1993) in their article *"Social Class and Social Justice"* presents the issue of distributive justice in term of the relationship between social class, social mobility and educational attainment. This article mainly deals to find out the main causes of inequality in the society. They want to know that these inequalities are either due to unequal opportunities or the hallmark of meritocracy. This article does not suggest which is the best method to eliminate the disparities from the society.

Statement of the Problem

It is not possible to engage in research without any existing problem. Most of the research have been done to solve some current problem which was a major obstacle in the progress and happiness of society or nation. A statement of problem refers to those critical objectives that our research seeks to address. The main motive of this research is to present the conceptual study of concept of social justice of John Rawls and Amartya Sen.

There are different type of approaches that present the different standpoint to determine the nature of social justice and under these distinct perspectives, there are many scholars,

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theorists and thinkers who have offered dissimilar ideas regarding the social justice to present the conceptual analysis. On the basis of analysis, there are mainly two streams of social justice; one is the procedural approach of justice that is followed by libertarian thinkers and those theorists who believe in transparency and fairness of process in pursuit of social justice. Second stream is the substantive approach of justice which is favored by all those thinkers who want to reduce the inequality from the society and believe in welfare structure of state.

'Procedural' or 'formal' approach of justice refers to the manner in which decisions or outcome are achieved. In other words, procedural justice concerns the fairness and transparency of the process through which decisions are made and the outcome of its implementation is not so important because it is argued that if a just rule and procedural are formulated then the outcome will necessarily be just. The proponents of the procedural justice are Herbert Spencer, F. A. Hayek, M. Friedman and Robert Nozick and suchlike believe in the principle of laissez- faire, that is, the role of government is limited to protection the rights of people. In other words, role of the state would be as 'minimum state'. Herbert Spencer in his idea of justice favors the role of minimum state and says "every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other men" (Spencer, 1891). Friedman has explained the principle of justice under the competitive capitalism. Hayek refuted the concept of social justice and believed that no society can be just or unjust. Robert Nozick favored the most influential right- based theory of justice under the 'entitlement principle' and through this tries to determine such a rules that would be helpful in analyzing of valid or invalid property.

Procedural approach of justice doesn't provide any solid alternative through which the actual well-being and happiness of people can be determined. This approach has very limited perspective because this approach is based only on determining the just process through which decisions regarding goods, wealth, income and opportunities are made and the real journey of justice begins beyond this point.

The "fair outcome," not the procedure, is the main emphasis of the substantive approach to justice. It focuses on the issue, "is the outcome fair?" regardless of the method used to arrive at the conclusion. Thinkers like David Millar, John Rawls, Michael Walzer, and others supported the substantive approach to justice, which focuses on reducing social inequality and assessing people's well-being. However, each thinker defines their definition of justice using a

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different type of perspective. According to Michael Walzer, each group has unique demands based on their current situation, hence he rejects the idea of applying the same distribution principle to all facets of life. In his book "Social Justice," David Millar outlined several opposing social justice tenets. "To each according to his needs," "to each according to his right," and "to each according to his deserts" are these guiding ideas.

There is no denying that either of the two approaches to justice has significance in certain circumstances or settings. One method addresses "fairness of procedure," while the other addresses "fairness of result." However, as stated above by several philosophers from various ideologies, the question is, "is the concept of social justice restricted exclusively to allocations of resources?" First and first, it is necessary to build a basic understanding of the concept of social justice or to formulate the fundamental question of "justice for whom?"—for people, for resources, or for both. There is no question that people are the main focus of justice. If individuals are involved in justice, "what must be the central issue of discussion?" people? or assets? or both? Amartya Sen was the first to see this and propose the "capacity approach" as a social justice strategy. The capability approach focuses on people's ability to be or do something that adds value to their lives. Conversely, John Rawls uses the phrase "justice as fairness" to describe his idea of justice. Rawls presents two principles of justice under his concept of social justice. The "equal liberty principle" and "diversity principle and the fair equality of opportunity" are the first two.

Research Questions

1. Which concept of the changing nature of social justice from ancient times to the modern era is the ideal concept and why?
2. On what basis and to what extent is John Rawls's concept of social justice viable to reduce inequalities from society? And how?
3. How does Amartya Sen's Capability approach provide a solid alternative for determining and fulfilling the actual well-being?
4. What are the basic similarities and differences in the concept of social justice of both thinkers? And which concept will lead to a more meaningful life?

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Research Objectives

1. To present the analytical study of social justice from ancient times to present era.
2. To present the conceptual study on Rawls's concept of social justice in reducing inequalities and maintaining a just order within the society.
3. To present an analytical study on Sen's capability approach of social justice in leading a just life.
4. To present the comparative study of Rawls and Sen's concept of Social justice.

Research Methodology

This research is based on analytical analysis. The primary methodology of this study will be analytical. This study is qualitative in nature and primarily based on primary and secondary data. The source of primary data will be based on the originals work of John Rawls and the Amartya Sen . The secondary data for this study will primarily come from books, research articles, newspapers and if necessary online sources also and so on. Primary data collection tools, such as interviews, questionnaires, surveys and schedules may also be considered, if needed. Libraries of Allahabad University, Delhi University and JNU University will be visited for the purpose of data collection.

Expected Outcome of Research

This research "Concept of Social justice of John Rawls and Amartya Sen : An Analytical Study" will provide an analytical study on the core idea of social justice of both the thinkers. In context to John Rawls, this study will provide the conceptual analysis of how Rawls's theory of justice offers a strong normative framework for institutional designs. On the other side, this research will also shed light on the concept of capability approach of Amartya Sen to explore how it contributes to determining and fulfilling actual well-being of people. This research is based on analytical analysis of the concept of social justice of two thinkers. So at the end, it will present the comparative perspective of their concept of social justice.

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Tentative Chapterisation

Introduction

Chapter 1 : Ideal of Justice : A Conceptual Analysis

Chapter 2 : Social Justice: Reducing Inequalities

Chapter 3 : Capability Approach: Achieving Well-Being and Just Life

Chapter 4 : Comparative Study of Social justice of Rawls and Sen

Conclusion

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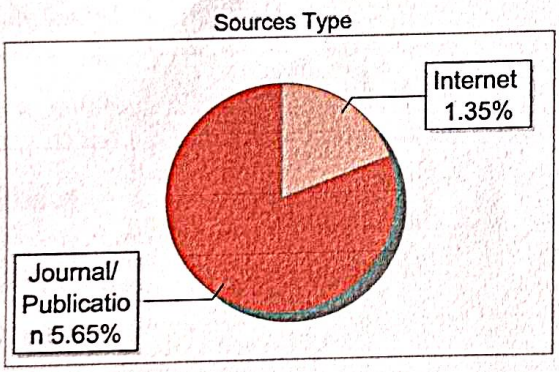

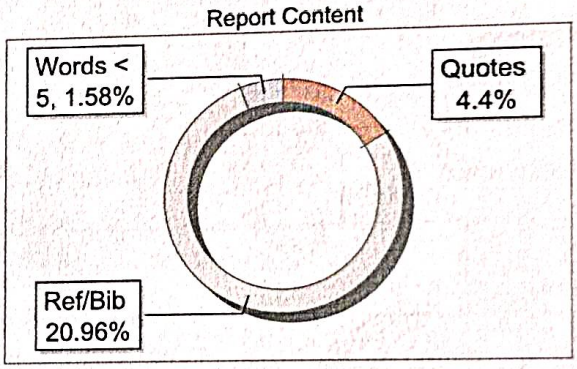

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